



## Klamath Network Featured Creature

### August 2007

### *Speckled Dace* (*Rhinichthys osculus*)

#### FIELD NOTES:

##### General Description:

The speckled dace (*Rhinichthys osculus* (Girard)) belongs to the Cyprinidae, or minnow family. This small fish (generally <8 cm) is distinguished by small scales, a pointed snout, a thick tail, a small subterminal mouth, 6-9 dorsal fin rays, and 6-8 anal fin rays. Its pharyngeal teeth are hooked and have only a slight grinding surface. *R. osculus*' color is highly variable, but generally dusty yellow to dark olive on the back and sides and yellowish to whitish on the belly. Fish larger than 3 cm usually have dark speckles on their sides and backs, dark side splotches that can appear like a lateral band, a stripe on the head that goes to the end of the snout, and a spot at the base of the tail. During breeding season (June and July), both males and females develop orange to red markings on the bases of their fins. Males may have red snouts and lips during this time as well.

##### Interesting Fact:

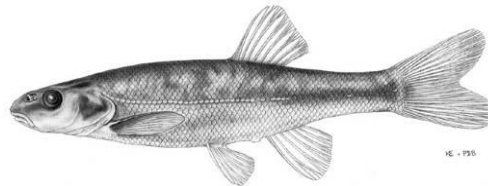
The speckled dace is a remarkably adaptive species found in a range of habitats. The species has a variable body shape depending on the type of habitat it occupies. It tends to have a small, chunky form in springs and slow streams and a larger, stream-lined form in fast moving waters. Presently, it is unknown to what degree this change in morphology is fixed or plastic depending on the environment.

##### Where to see it in the Klamath Parks:

NPSpecies documents certified evidence of the speckled dace in Lassen Volcanic National Park and Redwood National and State Parks.



© <http://www.nps.gov/fobu/naturescience/fish.htm>



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© <http://calfish.ucdavis.edu/calfish/SpeckledDace.htm>

##### Feeding:

Small groups of speckled dace forage among the rocks for benthic insects such as caddisflies, mayflies, and midges. Dace may also feed on large flying insects and zooplankton at the water's surface. They commonly feed at night, as they are more vulnerable to bird predation during the day. The speckled dace's main competition for food is with sculpins.

##### Habitat:

Speckled dace are found in a remarkable variety of habitats, from small springs, brooks, and pools to larger rivers and deep lakes. The places where dace are found usually have clear, well-oxygenated, moving water and abundant deep cover. They prefer shallow riffles, mostly <1 m deep, but have been found at depths up to 61 m.

##### Distribution:

*Rhinichthys* species are found in almost all North American drainages. The speckled dace is the most widely distributed native fish species in the western U.S., and is also found from Canada to Mexico.

##### Status:

*R. osculus*' status is variable depending on the subspecies or population isolation. For the most part, it is abundant and widely distributed, which is true of populations in the Klamath region. It is considered endangered in Canada and protected under Canada's Species at Risk Act.

##### Additional Information:

For more information on the speckled dace, visit the [COSEWC report on speckled dace conservation in Canada](#) and the [Canada Species at Risk Act species profile](#).